UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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SUMMER WATERFOWL SURVEY BEGINS

The Department of the Interior said today that a team of waterfowl flyway biologists and merial observers from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service, has begun initial stages of the regular summer's waterfowl breeding ground survey. Biologists from several States, the Canadian Wildlife Service, and Canadian Provinces will cooperate.

Although the severe drought that has plagued the primary waterfowl nesting area on the northern prairies for the past six years has not been broken, there is a potential for improvement in habitat conditions due to winter snows. Bureau biologists are hopeful of improved nesting conditions in some parts of the prairies.

Approximately 10 Federal airplanes, plus others from State Game Departments, will be used to cover the 100,000 miles usually flown during each summer survey. Each airplane will have a pilot and an observer. Straight parallel lines or transects over predetermined permanent courses are flown at an altitude of approximately 100 to 200 feet, with each man covering a strip 220 yards wide on his side of the plane.

The first stage of the survey covers all aerial transects to determine the comparative number of breeding birds, by species, in each of the survey units.

The second stage covers the same transects during July to measure the nesting success or the hatch. This will give an estimate of the number of young birds that will become part of the flocks that will head south in the fall. Ground crews also work permanent study areas to obtain detailed information on this year's waterfowl crop.

Fish and Wildlife Service planes have covered remote areas in northern Canada each summer since 1947, and have flown more than a million miles despite interruptions because of mechanical difficulties and adverse weather, every survey has been completed on time.

The planes are equipped for emergencies. Those flying the survey routes in northern Canada and Alaska carry tents, bedding, guns, emergency fishing equipment, and plenty of extra rations, plus battery-operated emergency radios. The men are supplied to get along in the wilderness for weeks, if necessary.

Data obtained from the breeding ground survey, along with the results of the winter waterfowl survey and last season's hunter kill survey, will provide the basis for considering next season's regulations.